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SOME LATER ASPECTS OF WOMAN SUFFRAGE.

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MOST questions and issues have their season. But the issue and question of woman suffrage, like death, seems to have "all seasons for its own." It sows its tares, like the enemy, while most women sleep; and with a vigor and a vigilance worthy of a better cause, the promoters of it are everywhere and all the time at work. It was to be supposed—and by most of the women opposed to suffrage, it was supposed—that nobody would venture to suggest to the representative party gatherings at the last political conventions, to stop and think about women's votes, when they were stirred to the utmost by the great financial questions about silver and gold; and when each party was laboring to do that which would unite its different factions. But the suffrage women certainly were silverites, in the sense that they preferred speech to golden silence, and insisted on being heard. No one of the anti-suffrage women imagined, either, that that question could be brought into the Presidential election, but Mrs. Victoria Woodhull Martin—name neither *clarum* nor *venerabile* to some of us—announces the discovery, which she made twenty-six years ago, that the written words of the Constitution of the United States giving her the right to vote will this year be operative; that the Colorado women will vote for Presidential electors this fall, and that "the next President may owe his election to a woman." Under these circumstances, I should be glad to call the attention of the readers of the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, in its columns, to the claims of women who desire not to be burdened with this duty, and to some new light thrown upon it by things that have been said and done within the last few months. I begin with the constitutional interpretation of Mrs. Martin. She

is the editor of a magazine called *The Humanitarian*; and the leading editorial in the issue of the magazine for July, 1896, is devoted to woman's suffrage. It is prefixed by a recent photograph of Mrs. Victoria Woodhull Martin, and interspersed woodcuts of her in various attitudes; first, before the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives, modestly reading an argument; secondly, boldly accepting a nomination for President of the United States in Apollo Hall, New York, while a multitude of men's hats, flying in the air or held on canes, are waved by manly hands; and, thirdly, with the poetical and classical affix "*Victoria Victa*" standing with her sister, to be denied the exercise of the electoral franchise, in the city of New York, on the 7th day of November, the year not being given. Mrs. Martin considers that the cause of woman suffrage in America is virtually won.

"If it be conceded that the women of the State of Colorado should vote for the President at the Presidential election of 1896, on what grounds of reason or justice shall the women of the other States of the Union be debarred from voting too? To permit the women of Colorado to vote at the Presidential election and to exclude the women of the remaining States will be an illogical and invidious position which cannot be maintained."

There is a little difficulty in the fact that Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming are the only States in which women are permitted to cast their votes, the woman's vote in Kansas being only in municipal elections. And there is a little discouragement, too, in that New York, in its Constitutional Convention, denied suffrage to women by a vote of two to one; that the Legislatures of South Carolina and Rhode Island have just refused it; that in Massachusetts 95 per cent. of the population of the State declined it by a popular vote; and that other States have, to say the least, not granted it yet. But difficulties and discouragements do not disturb Mrs. Martin. "The cause of woman suffrage," she says, "is virtually won." I am glad she is content with the winning, and hope that it may go no further. But there is a discrepancy between Mrs. Martin's satisfaction and her argument. Her satisfaction is that a single State, Colorado, permits its women to vote. Her argument is that the State has no call or concern to deal with the question at all, since it is settled, she says, by the 14th Amendment of the Constitution of the United States. Of this fact

she was the original discoverer twenty-six years ago. The only result, so far, was her unsuccessful nomination for President, in Apollo Hall, and her unsuccessful attempt to vote at the polls in New York. Still she discovered this, acting, she says, "on her own initiative," whatever that may mean; and she states that "the day in which for the first time a woman's voice—her own—was heard, in the Judiciary Chamber at Washington, was not only the most memorable day of her life, but also a memorable day in the history of the woman's movement in America." "The argument," she says, "was lengthy," and "three weeks later the majority report was presented to the House of Representatives, admitting the basic proposition of her memorial, but"—by some most illogical inconsistency—"recommending that the petition should not be granted." She also adds that "the sensation which followed the printing of her memorial was *immense*." And yet, in spite of this modest estimate of her discovery and its influence, she was not elected President and not even allowed to vote. Since that time, she says that the women suffragists have drifted away from her position and "gone back to the old discredited methods and worn-out cries." Mrs. Victoria Woodhull Martin admits one or two things with great frankness: that the progress of the cause generally is very far short of what it was confidently hoped it would be twenty-four years ago; that internal dissensions, divisions, and jealousies have been the bane of the suffrage movement from the beginning; that in England the subject has been dropped, "despite the platitudes of vote-catching ministers," "with a silence which is almost contemptuous." We thank her for the honesty of these admissions, which have in them a plain and strong argument against the fitness of women by temperament for political life; and echo her suggestion that those "who would govern others must first learn to govern themselves." But what of the constitutional argument? It strikes us as the weakest of all weak positions that have yet been taken from which to push this preposterous and dangerous claim. There is no faintest or remotest relation between woman suffrage and the 15th Amendment of the Constitution, which reads:

"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States, or by any State, on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

Women are not a race. They certainly are too many colored to be prejudiced by any one hue; and except upon the silly cry of emancipation, they are not, and have not been, "in a previous condition of servitude." So there is no shadow of reference to the case.

The 14th Article of the Constitution reads thus :

"All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States, and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

But nobody is talking about abridging privileges or immunities to citizens. Mrs. Victoria Woodhull Martin means, of course, women citizens; but they have never been *granted* the privilege and immunity of voting, consequently the existence of the word "male" before the word "person" in our State constitutions does not *abridge* any woman's privilege, because she never had it. The Constitution does not deny that women are citizens, because women are persons. It does not, therefore, say that they have the privilege of voting; and Mrs. Martin falls between two stools, because she acknowledges that the Colorado women get their authority to vote by action of the State, and not by the Constitution of the United States; and she claims that voting is not a *privilege* but the *right* of women, which cannot, therefore, be counted under the constitutional head of privilege or immunity. I think it will be a long while before woman suffrage gets anything but a minority report in favor of it on this claim.

I find the same claim made by Mr. W. S. Harwood in the May number of the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW. "The Constitution of the United States permits the suffrage of women;" but the positiveness of this assertion is stronger than the argument that sustains it. The article of the Constitution which declares that "all persons born or naturalized in the United States are citizens of the United States, etc.," deals with *privileges* and *immunities*, and not with the *right* to vote, or with any other right at all. And there certainly is a distinction between rights and privileges and between rights and immunities. The 15th Amendment, which deals with the right of citizens to vote, refers exclusively

to questions of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude," and consequently has no reference whatever to *sex*. Mr. Harwood's application of the definition of a person as "a man, woman, or child" proves too much. He says that adultism (wretched word) is taken for granted. But if *all persons* are citizens in the sense of having from that fact a right to vote, then it follows that children have a right to vote. Mr. Harwood's attempt to get rid of the force of the word "male" in the second section of the 14th Amendment, "when the right to vote is denied to any of the *male* inhabitants of such State," limps badly. He says "there is no suggestion here that women may not be voters"; but there is plainly the suggestion that in the mind of the Constitution only male inhabitants are thought of as voters, else the argument would mean that denying a right to male voters was a crime with a penalty, but that it would not be a crime, and would have no penalty to deny the right to female voters. Over against his supposed case of a test question, "If the Colorado electors should decide the question of the Presidential election"—and may Heaven avert the calamity of such a close vote—over against this must be borne in mind the fact, that if not giving women the right to vote, in the State of New York, for instance, is a violation of the fourteenth article and the fifteenth amendment, because it is either "abridging privileges and immunities," or because it is denying or abridging the right to vote by "reason of race, color, or previous condition of servitude," then the electoral vote of New York might be contested on the ground of unconstitutionality. The fact is that the Constitution of the United States does not settle, does not deal with, this question of woman suffrage at all. The implication in the second section of the 14th Amendment is very strong, that the framers or the amenders of the Constitution take for granted that only males were voters. But the strong point is this, that throughout our history voting has been considered as belonging to men of full age; that it is so specified in many State constitutions (where it could not constitutionally be if the Constitution gave the right to women); that the female suffrage advocates have felt and still feel that their only way to secure the vote is by altering the State constitutions, to cut out the word "male" before "person," or to insert the word "female." And if Colorado women vote for Presidential

electors this year, it will not be because the Constitution of the United States allows it, but because, no definite prohibition of it being in that document, the State of Colorado has decided what many other States disallow or have refused, that its women may vote. Whether that decision under all the traditions of our history and under the plain implications of the Constitution would hold before the court is for lawyers and not laymen to say.

The editorial just quoted from *The Humanitarian* states that woman suffrage is not in the forefront of American politics. It is not the fault of the women suffragists that it is not so this year. When the Republican National Convention met in St. Louis in June, 1896, Mrs. Lillie Devereux Blake presented to the Committee on Resolutions a petition, which, after a long preamble, asked to have introduced as a plank in the Republican platform, this resolution :

"*Resolved* : That we favor the submission of the question of woman suffrage to the qualified voters in all States where there is a demand for such submission."

What they succeeded in getting was this :

"The Republican party is mindful of the rights and interests of women. Protection of American industries includes equal opportunities, equal pay for equal work, and protection to the home. We favor the admission of women to wider spheres of usefulness, and welcome their co-operation in rescuing the country from Democratic and Populistic mismanagement and misrule."

With an incoherent inconsistency, which passes even ordinary feminine unreasoning, having secured *this* from the Republicans, they proceeded to the Democratic-Populist Convention in Chicago with a similar demand, but naturally not for similar reasons. Just why that hysterical gathering of revolutionary radicals, who attacked every sacred and stable element of government and society, did not add to their political heresies this disturbing of the divine balance of the sexes, this destroying of the peace and sanctity of home, passes comprehension ; but they did not. Possibly they may have had in mind the St. Louis suggestion of their mismanagement and misrule and not been, therefore, attracted much to the women themselves. Mrs. Crannell says that it was "a convention of surprises," and Mrs. Crannell knows ; for, under God, it was due to her quiet, clear, strong, dignified presentation of the argument against woman suffrage that the plank proposed by Mrs. Blake was not introduced into the Repub-

lican platform ; and that the whole thing was treated, in the Democratic Convention, with "a silence that was almost contemptuous." Mrs. W. Winslow Crannell, of Albany, both in St. Louis and Chicago, alone, and in the midst of a company of woman suffragists who were, as she said laughingly, "in the ratio of 16 to 1," did a service which the best of American womanhood is grateful for. And she illustrated, moreover, just what kind of power a true woman, not unsexed, can exercise in the way of political influence, so long as she is excused from entering the ranks of voters or candidates for office. She needs and asks no praise from me. I am glad that her admirable speeches at these two conventions have been printed and distributed by the Anti-Suffrage Association of the Third Judicial District of the State of New York. They deserve the careful study of everyone interested in this subject. Dr. Swenson, of Kansas, one of the Resolutions Committee, at the St. Louis Convention, said to her, after she concluded her speech : "I live in Kansas, where women vote. You voice my sentiments to the letter. I wish all women were of the same mind as you."

A few extracts from her two addresses will give an impression both of the ability and of the direction of her argument.

"Do you think that a solution of the problem that is vexing men's minds and casting shades of gloom over the whole country can be found in adding to the already unwieldy and uncertain quality called male suffrage, the vote of every woman in this land ?

"For suffrage is not asked only for the women who are here to-day, but for every woman in our land, without regard to intelligence or morality.

"If there be any among you who believes at all in the extension of suffrage to all women, I ask you, seriously, is this the time for its inception ? Have you not to face such problems as have not often vexed men's souls, and do you think it would be wise, at this time, to throw into the boiling mass of unrest and disquiet the uncertain element of woman suffrage ?"

Mrs. Crannell's statistics as to the proportion of women suffragists to population is taken from the *Woman's Journal*, which is edited by the husband and daughter of Lucy Stone.

"I appear before you unwillingly ; but as the representative of the many millions of women who have hitherto proved the "silent majority." I come from New York State where there are only 1,600 enrolled suffragists out of nearly 7,000,000 people, or 29 organized suffragists to every 100,000 of her population. I have also been asked to represent the home-loving women of Massachusetts, where there are but 51 organized suffragists to every 100,000 of her people ; of Pennsylvania, where there are only 14 organized suffragists to every 100,000 of her population ; of New Hampshire, where there are but 5 suffragists to every 100,000 of her inhabitants ; of Connecticut, where there

are only 23 suffragists to every 100,000 of her inhabitants ; of South Carolina, where there are but 3 suffragists for every 100,000 of her people ; of Arkansas, where there are only 3 suffragists to every 100,000 of her people ; besides being asked to speak by women of prominence in California, where there are but 33 suffragists to every 100,000 of her people ; in Illinois, where there are but 13 suffragists to every 100,000 of her people ; in Michigan, where there are only 6 suffragists to every 100,000 of her people ; in Kentucky, where there are but 33 suffragists to every 100,000 of her people ; in Iowa where there are only 6 suffragists to every 100,000 of her people ; in Virginia, where there is but 1 suffragist to every 100,000 of her people ; in Maryland, where there are only 6 suffragists to every 100,000 of her people ; in Maine, where there are but 12 suffragists to every 100,000 of her people ; in Ohio, where there are only 11 suffragists to every 100,000 of her people ; and in New Jersey, where there are but 8 suffragists to every 100,000 of her people. All these requests coming to me unsolicited."

She replies to what Mrs. Victoria Woodhull Martin calls "the worn-out cries of the suffragists," which are not so worn out as not to be shrill enough to be heard a good way off in various points :

"First : That women who pay taxes should have a ballot. In answer, we assert that the women who pay taxes do not want the ballot. The taxes are not conditioned upon the right to vote. That there is no discrimination against women in taxation. That taxation is the price the citizens pay for the protection of their property, their life, their liberty.

"That while there are in New York State 144,000 women who pay taxes, there are at least 1,500,000 women who do not pay taxes ; and the granting of suffrage to these women would more than duplicate the evils from which the taxpayer now suffers.

"Second : That when women have the ballot, they will be employed constantly and at higher wages. The answer is shown in the fact that men vote and are yet unemployed.

"Third : That the cause of temperance will be helped when women vote. Statistics tell us that while the population of the United States has increased not 20 per cent. in the last two decades, the dram-taking and drug-drinking women have increased 500 per cent. *The Christian Advocate* is my authority for the statement that before the high-license law in Philadelphia, Pa., out of 8,034 saloon licenses, 3,696 were granted to women. In Boston, Mass., last spring, out of 1,100 liquor licenses, 491 were applied for by women.

"Fourth : If equal wages for equal work means anything at all, it means that no man shall be paid more for his work than the women are begging to receive. For instance, if that law could be passed and enforced, the merchant could say to his male employee that he could fill his shop with girls at half the price he was paying him, and while he preferred keeping the man at the higher rate, he must either discharge him or lower his wages to that which women were asking to receive.

"Fifth : The facts for the suffragists to prove are that suffrage is necessary for the protection of women, and that it would be beneficial to the state. They have not, and cannot, prove either. To-day, in New York State, and in many of the other States, a woman is protected better by the laws that men

have made than by any she could make herself. A husband cannot sell his real estate unless the wife joins in the deed. He cannot deprive her by will of right of dower. The wife can by deed or will dispose of her entire estate, real or personal, whether the husband consents or not. A father cannot now apprentice his child or make a valid appointment of a testamentary guardian without the consent of the mother, if she be living. The wife can carry on business on her own account, and is entitled to all the profits and earnings in that business, and may contract as if she were unmarried. Every profession is open to women, and every occupation also."

The practical result of woman suffrage, where it has been tried, is, perhaps, the strongest argument against it. Let us notice the result, as Mrs. Crannell gives it in our own country:

"The suffragists speak of what has been accomplished by woman suffrage in a hazy sort of way. Let us have facts.

"Cheyenne, the capital of Wyoming, where women have voted for a quarter of a century, has a population of less than 12,000. I am told that in Cheyenne there are 25 licensed gambling-houses, and that saloons are as numerous as any other kind of stores; and it has been officially stated that not a single act of legislation aimed at the betterment of the human race has been passed in Wyoming through woman's influence. General Thompson, who managed the Democratic campaign in Wyoming, in 1892, said: 'The women's vote is the easiest thing in the world to get, and the easiest thing to keep, and the easiest thing to manipulate of any element in politics.' After six months' residence in Wyoming, divorce may be obtained for 11 reasons!

"The history of woman's influence in the legislative halls of the other States where woman suffrage obtains is not a glowing tribute to their intelligence or probity, and has been in existence too short a time to be given as precedent for the States East and South. The partial suffrage referred to is also a thing not to be boasted of by the women who desire the suffrage. The record of the Massachusetts vote is that, in 1888, 20,252 women registered in the interest of school suffrage, and most of them voted, for it was a warfare of religious sects—a Protestant and a Roman Catholic fight, such as would appeal to most women. The next year the number of women registering was reduced nearly one-half. In 1891, 3,000 women registered and only two-thirds of that number voted. The same thing was tried in Connecticut and only two and one-half per cent. of the women entitled to vote exercised that right. Do you imagine for a moment that they would do better if a full franchise were given them? Who are the women who would go to the polls in stormy weather? I do not need to prove to you gentlemen that the women who would vote 'early and often' are not the women to whom you would trust the ballot in case of need."

I turn to a very remarkable paper in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* called "*La Féminisme*," which, I suppose, would be translated in English "Womanness," "in Australia and New Zealand," a paper written by Monsieur Pierre-Leroy Beaulieu. After speaking of the boldness of the Australian Colonists in

social matters and "their disdain of the traditions, prejudices they call them, of old Europe," he says :

"They have taken up Feminism with the same ardor as Socialism. New Zealand in 1893 and Southern Australia in 1895 gave women political electoral rights. If certain classes, agitated with vehemence cried out loudly for the extension of the electorate to women in the colonies which have adopted it, as they still do in those which have not yet decided the question, the mass of the public, and especially the mass of women, care nothing for this reform. In the upper classes, the indifference of women is complete on this subject. I have talked with a large number of them at Melbourne, in Sydney, and in New Zealand, and, without exception, they have replied to me that they cared nothing for the right to vote. Among the middle classes of people, especially in the little Bourgeoisie, a certain number, without doubt, are more interested in it; but really the only people who hold to this political emancipation are literary women, professors, and teachers; and still more, they tell me, divorced people, whose private life is unhappy and whose character is soured. It is naturally this group that makes itself heard. The great mass remain silent, precisely because it is indifferent. At the bottom, this whole feminist movement is nothing but a great *humbug*, devised by politicians who are always in pursuit of new agitations, by those who have lost their positions, and by hot-headed people; and it commands in Australia two powerful assistants: First, the working party, because the extremes of Democracy always confound the words 'change' and 'reform'; and also because the chiefs of the syndicates think that the women of the working classes, entirely deprived of political education, will vote in the same way as their husbands; while the most of those of the higher classes will abstain from voting. The second strong support of the movement which one finds very powerful in Australia, in England, and in every Anglo-Saxon country is the party of Temperance, or still more of Prohibition, which dreams of the entire suppression of the sale of alcoholic drinks, to which idea the mass of women is absolutely given over. If the women of the middle and lower classes are less uninterested than those of the upper classes in obtaining the right to vote, if a large number of them choose to use that which has been given to them, it is because they feel keenly about the frightful influence of alcohol upon their fathers, their husbands, and their brothers; and because they and their children are the first to suffer. In effect, if women do not eagerly desire to be admitted to the electorate in Australia—and that is a fact incontestable by anyone who observes it in good faith; they did, nevertheless, use the rights which had been given to them, once, with great ardor, when, in the elections of 1893 in New Zealand, the first and only elections in this Colony under the new *régime*, 78 per cent. were enrolled and 64 per cent. voted. The proportion of men was still stronger, namely 72. The question of the sale of alcoholic liquors played an important part in this electoral campaign, and the Parliament elected at this time passed new laws severely regulating the sale of liquors. Important as it may be to put a rein upon the plague of alcoholism, it is, nevertheless, a serious matter to bring about a social and political reform so deep as the admission of women to the electorate, not because of what it is worth in itself, but for accessory reasons.

"There is here an example of the greatest evil of modern society—the

subordination of all things to the electoral interest, the vote upon measures most important, without considering their intrinsic qualities and their future consequences, only because of the immediate results which can be expected from it. The very eagerness of the women in favor of the prohibition of alcohol, which has gained for them the sympathy of the Temperance party, does it not prove the tendencies of their nature which make least desirable their participation in the government? Is it not a witness of that tendency to decide, not according to reason, but according to sentiment—to go into extremes—to admit no middle ground? Is it not, above all, the proof of the favor with which they look upon ‘grandmotherly’ legislation, which would protect men against all danger and temptation, shut them up in a network of minuter prescriptions recalling the care, the watchfulness of every moment, with which the earlier years of their life were surrounded. There are curious contradictions among the promoters of this Feministic movement. There are the advanced people who have incessantly in their mouths the great name of Darwin and the theory of evolution. Why do they pretend to make in one day, then, woman the equal of man, although her subordinate position during series of ages (if it is not her original nature) has made her a very different creature. It is strange, too, that the same parties who preach the similarity of the two sexes should insist, beside the electorate, upon the eligibility of women and their admission to all the professions, and protest, on the other hand, against their employment in manufactories, not only because the work is injurious to their health, but because it prevents them from having leisure for the cares of the home, and because it destroys the family hearth.”

M. Leroy Beaulieu’s statement of a fact, often misstated, is very admirable: “Grant that woman is not inferior to man, but she is different. That is to say, inferior on certain sides, and superior on others. Let us leave her then to exercise her activities in the sphere in which that superiority has been demonstrated!”

It is quite possible that the fact asserted here, that the influence of women’s votes would be exercised in favor of prohibition, may be claimed as an argument in favor of woman’s suffrage. But that this does not necessarily follow is shown by the Wyoming experiences alluded to above. And more than that, leaving out of consideration the desirableness of prohibition—the philosophy of the question turns upon M. Beaulieu’s reasoning that it demonstrates the danger of political questions being decided by sentiment and feeling, if the ballot were given to that part of humanity which is by temperament sentimental and emotional. If there came, however, as there may come, the introduction of religious excitement into a political question, there would be an aggravation of the danger most serious and alarming.

The arguments *pro* and *con* have been stated and repeated over

and over. Little, if anything, new can be said on either side, only as the movement takes to itself some new phases or new phrases that need to be met. But against the argument of expectation, the constant claim that if or when women are allowed to vote the political atmosphere will be clearer, the corruption in politics will be done away with, and the best social and moral interests advanced—in answer to this argument of expectation stands the argument of experience, the statement of results where woman suffrage has been tried, the fact that it has not appealed to the women of the soundest, the safest, the most substantial character and position ; and the argument of experience is strong, uniform, and pronounced against giving women the privilege of voting. If the movement does not die out of itself, if it is not broken up by the avowed “ dissensions, divisions, and jealousies ” within it, it is sure to be scotched and killed by its own outcome and results.

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